



HOME PAGE FEATURE



ONE NIGHT WITH JANIS!

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Janis Joplin electrified the '60s with a voice so raw and powerful it seemed to fuel the runaway train persona that Joplin herself had become. But before there was the larger-than-life, counter-culture Queen of rock 'n' roll, there was a sensitive and lonely little girl, living in Port Arthur, Texas, just trying to find love and a place to fit in. *One Night With Janis Joplin* combines a full-throttle concert performance with a touching look at how the young artist was influenced by the blues masters – Bessie Smith, Odetta, Aretha Franklin, and Etta James – she idolized.

Janis Joplin shot to eternal fame with a legendary performance at the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival – a performance widely considered one of rock's most iconic moments. From there, her life became a psychedelic whirlwind of brilliant music, bell-bottoms, feather boas and, unfortunately, heroin. Then, in 1970, the greatest female rock star of her generation – the woman who blazed the trail for women to sing, wail and scream rock 'n' roll – was gone, found dead from an overdose at 7047 Franklin Avenue in Hollywood. She was only 27.

Joplin lived fast, died young and left behind a musical legacy very few singers can touch. Unlike Celine Dion or Barbra Streisand, she was not a great technical singer, but could express pain, passion and the yearning sounds of the human spirit in a way that ripped straight into the hearts of her fans – and left technically trained vocalists in the dust.

One Night With Janis Joplin is not your ordinary play. Utilizing a powerhouse, eight-piece rock band to channel Joplin's classic sound, writer/director Randy Johnson re-creates a full-blown, '60s-era Janis Joplin concert, speckled with biographical monologues. We are given poignant glimpses into Joplin's youth and treated to sweeping live versions of the classics that immortalized her, including *Piece of My Heart*, *Mercedes Benz*, *Ball and Chain*, and *Me and Bobby McGee*.

Mary Bridget Davies – one of the few performers capable of delivering Janis in all her whiskey-voiced, go-for-broke swagger – is thrilled to be playing the title character at The Pasadena Playhouse. "It's very liberating to be able to go up there and just let everything loose – whatever you're feeling – and put it into the music," Davies shares. "Janis was from a pre-pop era where artists would just go out and give it their all, no matter what. She didn't stand in the background with a tambourine and a dress and act properly."

Sabrina Elayne Carten, an exhilarating vocalist who portrays the female blues singers Janis revered – and whose soaring cover of Aretha Franklin’s *Spirit in the Dark* stands as one of the first act’s highlights – holds a deep appreciation for the history of the show’s music. “When you talk about women like Aretha Franklin, Bessie Smith and Odetta,” Carten explains, “you have to understand that these women were pioneers of their music genres. Soul music and a lot of rock ‘n’ roll stemmed from these artists. It is definitely music that has transcended the time period in which it was made. Janis’ mother exposed Janis to a lot of this music. Since Janis was a bit of a loner growing up, this music was able to shape her life and her musical identity. She went on to become the singer whose lyrics were not normal for a woman to sing. She sang about things that women just did not sing about at that time.”

There will never be another Janis Joplin. The times have changed and we no longer produce singers who can pummel and caress a lyric as beautifully as Joplin. *One Night With Janis Joplin* offers a journey back to the hippie sensibilities of the 1960’s with a stunning portrait of one of the era’s most compelling artists.

“This play is a celebration of the musical aspect of Janis’ life,” states Mary Bridget Davies. “She was not some loud, drunk junkie. She was a bright, sweet, well-educated, intelligent, caring and hilarious person. If people come away from the show having learned a little bit about who she really was, then we’ve done our job.”

[*One Night With Janis Joplin*](#) runs March 15 to April 11 at The Pasadena Playhouse. LAArtsOnline.com is proud to host the Opening Night party with Evian, Haven Gastro Pub, Maison Akira, Sugar Fix Bakery, and Trattoria Neopolis.